

**CLAIMS**

1. A process for producing a stable liquid leaven composition, the process comprising the steps of

- admixing in a liquid formulation at least a flavour improvement composition that comprises at least one sourdough or sponge based composition; a bread improver composition; and an active yeast, and
- ensuring that the residual sugar level of the liquid leaven composition is kept below 0.5% w/w on said liquid composition in order to obtain a stable liquid leaven composition.

2. The process according to claim 1, wherein the liquid leaven composition obtained is one with the gassing power of fresh yeast, the dough and bread improvement properties of a regular bread improvement system and the flavour enhancement properties as one can achieve with a sourdough process or a sponge process.

3. The process according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the flavour improvement composition that is admixed comprises at least one of the following: a sourdough; a sourdough product; a sponge; a sponge product; a supernatant of a sourdough, of a sourdough product, of a sponge or of a sponge product; a blend of aroma chemicals, acids and/or acidifying agents.

4. The process according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the flavour improvement composition that is admixed is a flour based improvement composition.

5. The process according to claim 4, wherein the residual sugar level of the liquid leaven composition

is kept below 0.5% w/w by hydrolising the flour contained in said flavour improvement composition prior to a fermentation step to liberate fermentable sugars out of the starch, these liberated sugars being eliminated by a microbial fermentation step.

6. The process according to claim 5, wherein a hydrolyzing enzyme, such as an amylase, is used to hydrolyze the flour.

7. The process according to claim 5 or 6, wherein microbial fermentation eliminates the sugars thus liberated and creates all the necessary flavour components.

8. The process according to any of claims 1 to 3, wherein the residual sugar level is kept below 0.5 % w/w by admixing a flavour improvement composition comprising at least one of the following: a supernatant of a liquid sourdough, a supernatant of a sourdough product, a supernatant of a sponge or a supernatant of a sponge product.

9. The process according to claim 8 wherein the supernatant that is admixed is a concentrated supernatant.

10. The process according to any of claims 1 to 3, wherein the residual sugar level is kept below 0.5 % w/w by admixing a sponge based flavour improvement composition.

11. The process according to claim 10, wherein the sponge based flavour improvement composition that is admixed may contain up to 10% alcohols provided that no flour traces remain.

12. The process according to any of the preceding claims, wherein the residual sugar level is kept

below 0.5% w/w by admixing a flavour improvement composition not comprising fermentable sugars.

13. The process according to claim 12, wherein said composition comprises at least one of the following: a blend of aroma chemicals, acids, acidifying agents.

14. The process according to any of the preceding claims wherein the bread improver composition that is admixed comprises chemical additives and/or enzymes.

15. The process according to claim 14 wherein said chemical additives admixed are selected from the group consisting of oxidizing/reducing agents such as ascorbic acid, cystein, glutathion, yeast extracts, hydrolyzed gluten, emulsifiers such as DATEM, SSL, CSL, GMS, bile salts, fatty materials and any mixture thereof.

16. The process according to claim 14 wherein said enzymes admixed are selected from the group consisting of amylases, hemi-cellulases, oxidases, proteases, lipases and any mixture thereof.

17. A process according to any of the preceding claims wherein fresh yeast is admixed.

18. The process according to claim 17 wherein the admixed yeast is used under the form of compressed yeast with a dry matter of around 30% and/or under the form of liquid yeast, preferably with a dry matter below 25%.

19. The process according to any of the preceding claims wherein the liquid leaven composition is further stabilised by adding a solution comprising a hydrocolloid or a gum, preferably a xanthane gum to the liquid leaven composition and/or by continuous mixing of the liquid leaven composition to prevent decantation.

20. The process according to any of the claims 1 to 18 wherein the liquid leaven composition is further stabilised by using a 1% level of an exopolysaccharide such as a dextran in the final product thereby preventing decantation.

21. The process according to any of the preceding claims, wherein additionally a drop of pH below 3.5, preferably below 4.0 is prevented.

22. The process according to claim 21 wherein such a drop of pH is prevented by adding a buffering system to the flavour improvement composition, by controlling the pH and/or by selecting specific lactic acid bacterial strains.

23. A liquid leaven composition obtainable by a method according to any of the preceding claims.

24. The product according to claims 23 which remains stable when stored for a longer period, preferably at least 1 week, most preferably at least about 4 weeks, at about 4°C.

25. The use of the liquid leaven composition according to claim 23 or 24 in the preparation process of a bakery product such as a bread, a pizza or a snack.